

T H E
L O U N G E R.

[N^o LXXX.]

Saturday, August 12. 1786.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

Dic mihi cras istud, Posthume, quando venit? MART.

S I R,

I Flatter myself you will not think me unworthy of your correspondence. Most of the members of my family have taken the liberty of communicating the particulars of their situation, or of praying redress of their grievances from the authors of the periodical works of the time/ and a certain dark-complexioned relation of mine has had a petition to yourself laid before the public in your 53d number. I think, Mr Lounger, I may say without much arrogance, I am not less deserving of your favour than her. She, I know, pretends to have sometimes assisted you in your labours; but it is to me you look for their reward.

Of that relation, Mr Lounger, since I have mentioned her, I may first complain. She was naturally of a serious, and rather melancholy cast. But of late a fashionable life has quite altered her disposition. She has become intolerably light-headed, gay, as her friends call it, and allows her affairs to get into the greatest confusion and disorder; all of which it falls upon me to re-establish and put to rights again. Her gaiety, when carried the ridiculous length to which in town she frequently pushes it, is the occasion of much sadness to me; her festivity gives me many a headache; her extravagance has frequently threatened me with a jail; and her impertinence brought me in danger of my life.

I am, generally speaking, indeed, the most unfortunate person in the world in regard to my predecessors. They got a thousand things upon trust, which they have left me to answer for. With all ranks and conditions of men, I am constantly the Scape-goat for every thing that is amiss, the Bail for all misdemeanors, the Security in all obligations. My burdens are now become so intolerable, that I am resolved (through your channel, if you will

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allow me) to rid myself of them at once, and to take out a *Commission of Bankruptcy* in the *Lounger*. What sort of division my circumstances will allow, you will please signify to the principal classes of my creditors in your next paper.

Tell such of them as may look for me at court, that I do not hold myself bound for above one shilling in the pound of the promises and notes of hand of my ancestors. With some people in place there, I have pretty long accounts to settle; but to these I know they do not pay much attention, for a very good reason indeed, that the balance is generally against them.

Let that class who frequent courts of law know, that I will not pretend to clear above a tenth part of the incumbrances that are there laid upon me. In all the courts, I must leave the other nine parts to be settled by my successors. In chancery, I don't know whether my great-great-grandson will be able to discharge them.

Be so kind as acquaint the Projectors of various denominations, who are so deep in my books, that I cannot answer above one in a thousand of the draughts they will probably make upon me. Nay, I will frankly tell them, that it is likely they may lose more than even the money they were made to advance for me. But as most of them expected usurious interest, their losses do not touch me very nearly.

I must inform those Lovers who have trusted me, that they are of all my creditors the most likely to be offended with me. They are indeed in a very singular situation with regard to the securities of mine in their possession. If they receive payment, it is a hundred to one but they will be undone by it.

My bonds to Beauties must suffer a very great discount. They are indeed of such a nature, that prescription soon bars them; and most of them are so conceived, that coverture or marriage in the obligee renders them absolutely void.

Authors will be often disappointed in the claims they pretend to have upon me. I never receive a fiftieth part of the books that modern writers desire their booksellers to send me. In order, however, to conciliate your favour, Sir, I will give you my promise, (though it is but fair to confess that I sometimes forget my promises), that the *Lounger* shall make one of my library.

Your most obedient servant,

TO-MORROW.

I HAVE lately received several letters on the subject of the Stage, and, among others, one signed *Nerva*, censuring in very strong terms that boisterous and noisy kind of applause which, in the midst of the most affecting passages of a tragedy, the bulk of a British audience are disposed to indulge in. It seems to have been written during the time of *Mrs Pope's* late performance in our theatre, whose tones of pity and of tenderness, my correspondent complains, were often interrupted or rendered inaudible by the drumming of sticks and the clapping of hands in the pit and gallery. He was the more struck with the impropriety, he says, from his being accompanied by a gentleman, a native of Italy, though enough a proficient in our language to understand the play. He describes "the surprise and horror of the susceptible *Albani*," (so it seems the stranger is called), accustomed as he had been to the decorum of the Italian stage, to find, instead of silent and involuntary tears, the roar and riot with which our audience received the most pathetic speeches of one of the best of our tragedies.

"On Sunday," continues my correspondent, "*Albani* and I went to church. The plainness of the edifice, and the simplicity of our worship, struck him much; yet he was pleased with the decency which prevailed, and charmed with the discourse." "I am surprised," said he, as we walked home, that "so elegant a preacher is not a greater favourite with the public." — "You are mistaken," I replied, "he has long been their favourite." — "Nay," said he, "do not tell me so; you saw they did not give him a single mark of applause during the whole discourse, nor even at the end." I laughed, Mr Lounger, and so perhaps will you; but I believe you will find "it difficult to assign any good reason, why silence, attention, and tears, which are thought ample approbation in the one place, should be held insufficient in the other; or why that boisterous applause which is thought so honourable in the Theatre, should be thought a disgrace to merit in the Pulpit or at the Bar."

I cannot however perfectly agree with my correspondent in this last observation. At the Bar, indeed, the clapping of hands, and the beating the floor with people's sticks, might do well enough; but at the Bar it is a rule, never to make a noise for nothing. In the Church, to say nothing of the indecency of the thing, disturbances of that kind are perfectly averse to the purpose for which many grave and good Christians go thither.

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In the Playhouse, besides the prescriptive right which the audience have now acquired to this sort of freedom, I think that part of the house by which it is commonly exercised have much to plead in its defence. The boxes frequently contrive to drown the noise of the stage, and it is but fair that the pit and gallery should in their turn drown the noise of the boxes.

My correspondent seems to allow this sort of applause at the representation of Comedy, or at least of Farce; and indeed I am inclined to think, that in some of our late Farces, a very moral use may be made of it, as the less that is heard of them by the boxes the better. The cudgels of the audience, of the barbarity of which Nerva complains so warmly, cannot be better employed, except perhaps they could be applied to recompense the merit of the author, instead of the talents of the actors. Moral writers on the subject of the Stage, used to vent their reproaches against the Comic authors of the last age, who mixed so much indecency with their wit. The censure does not exactly apply to the *petite piece* writers of our days; for they keep strictly to the unity of composition, and mix no wit with their indecency. I fairly confess, that I have been obliged to abate somewhat of the severity of my former opinion with regard to the wicked wits of the old school, and am content to go back to *Wycherley* and *Congreve*, having always thought, with my friend Colonel Caustic, that if one must sin, it is better to sin like a gentleman. Besides, a very dull or a very innocent person may possibly miss the allusion of a free speech, when it is covered with the veil of wit or of irony. But the good things of our modern Farce-mongers have nothing of disguise about them; the dishes they are pleased to serve up to us are not garlicked ragouts, but ragouts of garlic. I was much pleased with the answer which I heard a plain country gentleman give to another in the pit some weeks ago, who observed to him, that the farce was droll and laughable enough, but that there was a good deal of *double entendre* in it. I don't know what you may think *double*, said he in reply; but in my mind, it was as plain *single entendre* as ever I heard in my life.

E D I N B U R G H :

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